

## **“Tell Me More”**

If you’ve been at WIC for a while, maybe you’ve heard something like this from participants:

“I want a healthy pregnancy.”

“I want my child to eat better.”

“I want to lose weight.”

Those are worthy goals. But I’ve got a question for you:



- What is a “healthy pregnancy”? What are the *choices* that affect health during pregnancy? What choices do our pregnant participants want to discuss? What topics would they like to learn more about?
- What does “eat better” mean? Will “better” be to eat **more** or to eat **less** at mealtime? To try new foods? To choose different snacks?
- What behavior change will be used to attempt weight loss? More exercise? Eating meals at home? Increased water consumption?

➤ Did we remember to say “Tell me more”?

“Healthy pregnancy”, “eat better”, and “lose weight” is a great start! But is it a great finish?

*No way!* Our job is to keep the conversation going, and to learn more about what actions they want to take, or what nutrition topics will make a difference. We want to help our WIC families with what matters to them. If we look deep into our bag of tricks we’ll discover just what we need....

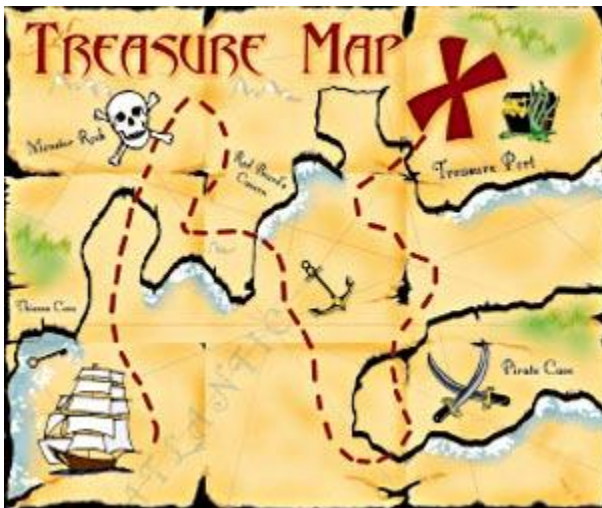
## ***Probing questions!***

Exactly what **does** probing mean? Different images may come to mind, like this:



Synonyms for probe are “to dig, to investigate, to explore”. The definition according to Merriam Webster is “to search into and explore”.

When we think of probing questions at WIC, we should think of something like this:



We’re searching for Treasure... What treasure? We want to find the best recommendations, the most valuable referrals, and the richest resources to save babies! To make life better for families. To find the things that are precious to them – the things that matter most. It’s easy to begin:

- Tell me more about what you mean by “healthy pregnancy”.
- Help me understand what you mean by “eat better”.
- Tell me about what you’re doing now to lose weight.

Is it always so simple? Fortunately not – that’s why our job can be so very *INTERESTING*. Let’s think about a few examples you might see on occasion.

## Tuffy Tyke, Picky eater

Mom: I want him to eat better.

**Probing questions:**



- Tell me about snacks and mealtimes.
- When has he eaten something that surprised you?
- What does he drink?
- What is something you think you can do differently when you go home today?
- What have you heard about things that work with picky eaters?

## Hopeful Holly

Holly: I just want a healthy pregnancy.

### *Probing questions:*

- What recommendations has your doctor shared?
- What have you heard about ways to stay healthy during pregnancy?
- What are you doing now to stay healthy?
- What would you like to discuss today that would help you to make better choices?
- Tell me more about what you've heard about how nutrition affects pregnancy.



*Practice thinking of probing questions and talking with your coworkers about what is working.*

**What do you think? Did we come to the rescue?**

## “Introductions”

Introducing...YOU!



Introductions can be awkward. Think of the time you were introduced to someone you were nervous or anxious? Did you find yourself smiling afterward?

Have you ever met someone and your initial introduction jaded you from learning more about a person?

For example:

A new employee is hired; she seems pleasant at first glance. Your supervisor introduces you “Jane meet Sue, Sue meet Jane” and walks away. You attempt to be polite and begin a superficial conversation and say “Sue great to meet you, how is it going?” Sue



has had way TOO much coffee or you fear is naturally overly perky, and Sue takes “how’s it going” as an invitation to tell you her life story. Sue begins to tell you about her job interview and what she is expecting to do, how she decided

on her clothes to wear the night before, the cat who slept on her black pants and how she acquired him, the phone call with her mom this morning and their rocky relationship . You panic and flee the area, hopeful to avoid her the rest of the day. Could this scenario have been avoided?

Whether it is a formal or an informal introduction, often times the first impression is the lasting impression. So how does this relate to WIC and client services?

After meeting a WIC participant and walking back to your desk together, you begin by saying “Pick a fabric that represents how you feel”

Maybe the participant gives you this look.



Or she goes off on a tangent.

Improve your success with a tool with a smart introduction. Remember how a nonspecific question with Sue led to a TMI (too much information) response? Introducing the tools in a nonspecific way can also lead you off path.

For example, saying "pick a fabric that says something about you feel" opens the door to many topics, not just nutrition. Here are some examples of how you can narrow it down:

- Feel around in this bag and choose a fabric that best represents how breastfeeding feels for you.
- Pick a fabric that describes what meal time is like for your toddler.
- Choose a fabric that for you, says something about how you feel when you offer new foods to your children.
- Select a fabric which describes how introducing solids to your 6 month old is going.



Appropriate introductions for each tool are an opportunity for a great 1<sup>st</sup> impression.

**Tell us more about probing questions that work well for you. Share difficult scenarios that we can discuss together. What else? Together We Can find what meets the needs of Arizona families. Reply to this email with suggestions, or Reply All to share any stories or tips.**

## “Surviving the Flood”



How is this picture like counseling in a WIC clinic? If you're like many others, you might say "because sometimes clients just open up and don't stop and it's a bit like when the flood gates open."



Sometimes we get a Chatty Cathy. Maybe she has a lot of nutrition related issues to share. Maybe she wants to share her personal issues. Or maybe she just wants to talk about some TMI (TOO MUCH INFORMATION) topics.

The flood gates have opened! You may think to yourself, "This doesn't have anything to do with a child or nutrition. I'm not Dr. Phil. Or Dr. Ruth, either! What can I do? How do I bring this back to nutrition or to WIC?"

Don't worry, there's help! Here are a few "life preservers" you can use to keep afloat in a conversation that suddenly gets much deeper than you expected.

- 1) **Keep the shore in sight** - Sometimes it's easy to get lost at sea and lose sight of the shore where nutrition and WIC topics are sitting. Our clients often deal with a lot of difficult issues, and





sometimes we may be the only person who listens. If you are finding that it's hard to get back on topic, remember that we can recognize that their road in life has detours and potholes and redirect it to a positive offering that WIC can provide, like nutrition tips and referrals.

**For example:** You use the magic wand with a mom and ask her what she'd change about her children's eating habits. You hear:

"I would love some help. My boyfriend feels that because he works all day that it's my sole responsibility to take care of the kids. He won't listen to me and he does what he wants, while I take care of his kids and my kids."

**Life preserver: You might say...**

- "It's a good thing the kids have you to spend time with them. It's tough when other people don't help out - but imagine what would happen if they didn't have you. I really admire your dedication to be there for them, you have a lot on your plate. We can talk about things that might help make feeding toddlers at least a bit easier. I can share what some other moms have told me, would that be okay?"

- 2) **Stay clear of the rocks-** It's a fact that some things are beyond our control and beyond what we might be able to help with. If things are getting a bit too intense, you can avoid hitting the rocks by remembering that when it's beyond what we can help with, refer (remember the 911 call Pam talked about).

**For Example:** A grandmother comes to WIC and you ask her to pick a metaphor image that describes how she feels her grandkids are eating. She picks the boxes and says:

"I love these kids but I can hardly keep up with them and I'm just tired. You know my daughter just left them with me every chance she could and now she's in prison. I could barely afford to feed myself and now I have 3 kids I have to feed too."

**Life Preserver: You might say...**

- "I can see why you're tired. It's impressive how much you've done for them... Look how happy they are, you can see they are loved. Someday soon, they'll be

bigger and will be able to help you out! You know, one of the things we can help you with is information on Food Stamps or other food programs, plus the food we'll offer you today. This might help you get by. Can I show you the list?"

### ***DON'T WORRY IF...***

- You can't solve the problems people share with you. Good listeners ease our minds and help us look at our problems with fresh eyes.
- Mom isn't ready for suggestions or recommendations. When we are fully present and listen, we establish trust. We may find that mom welcomes us to help with her concerns next time.
- Mom is distracted and doesn't participate. We all have busy lives and bad days. As long as you make people feel welcome and open the door to conversation, you have built a foundation for future success.

We want to hear how you handle these situations! What stories can you share about a client who opened the floodgates in your office? Were you able to stay afloat? Please tell us about an appointment that left you lost at sea. Please share with us any situations or stories that challenged you. We're here to listen and help you prepare for the next challenging participant.

Thank you for your courage to face the unpredictable waves of participant concerns. Your work preserves tender hearts and strengthens the hopes of Arizona families.

**Cheers!**

Your State Team

### **"Bridges to Nutrition"**

## **Good Afternoon Arizona WIC!**



Do you ever feel like this? You use one of the tools and you get a good response about how the mom feels, but find it hard to link it back to nutrition or back to other questions we might need to ask. Getting back to nutrition may feel like walking across a dangerous and unstable bridge. Let's take a look at a response many of you may have heard from using the Getting to the Heart of the Matter tools and see how you would respond.

**Example:**



You are certifying a first time pregnant mom and you whip out the Hopes and Dreams Doors (secretly hoping for the tears to start falling). Mom chooses a bright orange door and says, “I want my baby to have all the things that I never had. I want her to go to college, to be successful and have a bright future.”

You’re stuck! She didn’t mention nutrition. How can you bridge her hopes and dreams to nutrition? A wise woman, one Pam McCarthy, might answer: By wrapping it in LOVE! Each hope and dream that a mom shares is filled with emotion and love. By hearing the emotion that the mom expresses from her dream and relating it to food, you can successfully walk across this bridge!

**You could say:**

“Wow. Your baby is so lucky to have you as a mom! It sounds like you really want your baby to be smart, successful, loved, and nourished. What things are you doing today to nourish your baby?”

**Or maybe:**

“What an amazing dream to have for your child. By choosing to breastfeed you are setting up your little miracle for a successful and healthy life. What other things are you doing now to help you and your baby stay healthy?”

What other phrases or things have you said to try to bridge their dreams to nutrition? Listening to mom’s hopes and dreams, affirming those dreams, and tying it into nutrition might feel more like walking across this bridge!

You’ll find attached to this email a few more examples.



**Please “reply all” with great stories or difficult situations when a participant’s concern needed a bridge back to nutrition. Sometimes it’s not easy.**

**Together we want to improve our skills at making WIC a place that can be the bridge that connects everyday concerns to the bright future that parents want for their children.**

***Thank you for dedicating your heart to improving the health of Arizona families!***

